

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8455

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

UNCLAS TUNIS 1465

FOR COMMERCE

RABAT FOR AGATT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP (TABOR, JOHN K.) BEXP, TS

SUBJ: EXPORTS OF TUNISIAN OLIVE OIL TO US

1. DURING VISIT TO TUNIS BY UNDER SECRETARY OF COMMERCE TABOR, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HASSAN BELKHODJA ASKED THAT EFFORT BE MADE TO PERMIT HIGH-QUALITY TUNISIAN OLIVE OIL TO BE EXPORTED DIRECTLY TO US. MINISTER NOTED THAT TUNISIAN OIL PRESENTLY EXPORTED PRIMARILTY TO FRANCE AND ITALY WHERE IT IS COMBINED WITH LOCAL OIL AND REEXPORTED TO US AT HIGHER PRICE THAN RECEIVED BY TUNISIA. BELKHODJA HOPED THAT USG COULD ASSIST TUNISIAN EFFORTS TO BYPASS FRENCH AND ITALIAN MIDDLEMENT TO BENEFIT OF BOTH TUNISIAN EXPORTER AND US CONSUMER.

2. DURING CALL BY AMBASSADOR, MINISTER BELKHODJA ARRANGED MEETING FOR EMBOFF WITH FRADJ JABBES, PRESIDENT-DIRECTOR GENERAL OF OFFICE OF OILS, WHO SAID THAT TUNISIA INDEED ANXIOUS INCREASE ITS DIRECT EXPORTS OF OIL TO US. TUNISIA, HE NOTED, PRODUCES WIDE VARIETY OF OLIVE OILS OF DIFFERENT QUALITIES AND PRICES AND OF DIFFERING TASTES. TUNISIA COULD MAKE AVAILABLE 10,000 METRIC TONS FOR US MARKET FROM 74/75 CROP CONSISTING OF 4,000 TONS WITH 0.3/1.0

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PER CENT ACID CONTENT, 2,000 TONS AT 1.0/1.5 PERCENT,

2,000 TONS AT 1.5/3.0 PERCENT, AND 2,000 TONS OF "RIVIERA" BLEND (MIXTURE OF HIGH QUALITY AND CHEAPER REFINED OILS). HE ASKED THAT THIS OFFER BE BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF INTERESTED US IMPORTING FIRMS, EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH PUBLICATION IN APPROPRIATE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PUBLICATION, WITH SUGGESTION THAT SUCH FIRMS WRITE DIRECTLY TO: MR. FRADJ JABBES, PRESIDENT-DIRECTOR GENERAL, OFFICE NATIONAL DE L'HUILE, 10 AVENUE JEAN JAURES, TUNIS, TUNISIA. DEPENDING UPON RESPONSE JABBES SAID THAT HE IS PREPARED TO GO TO US IN JUNE OR EARLIER IF POSSIBLE WITH APPROPRIATE SAMPLES FOR DIRECT DISCUSSION OF PRICES, DELIVERY SCHEDULES, QUALITY CONTROLS, ETC., WITH INTERESTED FIRMS.

3. JABBES SAID THAT AT LEAST 20,000 TONS COULD BE EXPORTED FROM 75/76 CROP AND EVEN GREATER QUANTITIES SENT TO US IN FUTURE AS CONFIDENCE BY AMERICAN CONSUMERS AND IMPORTERS IN TUNISIAN SUPPLY SOURCE IS ESTABLISHED. HE NOTED THAT OILS OFFICE, AS STATE ENTERPRISE AND ONLY LEGAL IMPORTER AND EXPORTER OF EDIBLE OILS IN TUNISIA, HAS FULL BACKING OF GOT WHICH HELPS GUARANTEE ITS RELIABILITY. HE ALSO NOTED THAT OIL COULD BE EXPORTED IN BULK, CANS OR BOTTLES AS DESIRED BY US IMPORTER AND SUGGESTED THAT GOT WOULD PROBABLY BE RECEPTIVE TO INVESTMENT BY PRIVATE US FIRMS TO ESTABLISH OLIVE OIL PACKING PLANT IN TUNISIA FOR EXPORT TO US UNDER OF APRIL 1972 WHICH PROVIDES FAVORABLE TAX AND OTHER INCENTIVES.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: IN VIEW IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO INCREASING OLIVE OIL EXPORTS TO US BY MINISTER, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE IF INFORMATION PARAS 2 AND 3 ABOVE COULD BE BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF US EDIBLE OIL IMPORTERS AND THAT USDOC ENCOURAGE INTERESTED FIRMS TO CORRESPOND DIRECTLY WITH JABBES, WITH COPIES OF CORRESPONDENCE TO EMBASSY. HOPE USDOC COULD ALSO ASSIST JABBES IF HE VISITS US TO CONCLUDE SALES.
SEELYE

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